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SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ASSISTANCE

Programme of assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Administrator

SUMMARY

In response to General Assembly resolution 33/147 of 20 December 1978, the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People has become an important provider of development assistance to the Palestinian inhabitants in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, reaching a record level of activity in 1992. The present report gives the financial situation of the Programme, highlights some of its major achievements and describes some of the new activities envisaged.

I. FINANCIAL SITUATION

1. The core resources of the Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People have been provided by the Governing Council through allocations from Special Programme Resources. These allocations are as follows: second cycle (1980-1981) - $3.5 million; third cycle (1982-1986) - $10 million; fourth cycle (1987-1991) - $12 million; and fifth cycle (1992-1996) - $15 million.

2. Since the inception of the Programme, complementary resources have been provided by the Governments of Italy ($15 million), Japan ($11 million), the United States of America ($1.5 million), Jordan ($457,000), Canada ($400,000), Greece ($80,000), Tunisia ($48,500) and the Arab Gulf Fund for United Nations Development Agencies ($1 million). These non-core resources have been provided in various forms, including "in-trust" arrangements as well as individual management service agreements.

3. The Administrator, on behalf of the many thousands of beneficiaries in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, expresses appreciation for the generous and timely voluntary contributions that are permitting the Programme to expand the scope of its work so substantially.

II. PROGRAMME DELIVERY AND PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

4. In 1992, the Programme achieved a level of activity unmatched in its 12-year history, with expenditures totalling $12 million. A number of large projects were completed, including the extension and renovation of the Princess Alia Hospital in Hebron, the construction of a packing and grading facility for fruits and vegetables in Gaza, the construction of a new sewage collection network in the Balata refugee camp of Nablus and the installation of a sewage collection, treatment and disposal system in the northern region of the Gaza Strip benefiting some 120,000 persons.

5. The construction of a large-scale citrus processing plant in Gaza is progressing; work began on 1 June 1992 and is expected to be completed by mid-1993. The plant represents the largest technical cooperation and capital assistance project in the Gaza Strip. It is designed to process one third of Gaza's citrus production, the main agricultural crop in that area.

6. A major effort has been undertaken to analyse the priorities for technical cooperation and capital assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. A needs assessment exercise has been carried out in order to create the necessary base for the planning and the implementation of future Programme activities. The need to enhance training opportunities in virtually all sectors of development has been identified as a most urgent priority. As a consequence, several training workshops were organized in different parts of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip throughout 1992.

7. The following Palestinian groups benefited from training workshops: 150 trade unionists took part in three workshops conducted in Nablus, Bethlehem and Gaza; 13 management consultants benefited from the services of the Business Development Centre; 80 Palestinian women took part in special technical training

programmes at the community level; 15 members of Palestinian universities were trained in new education techniques; 90 vocational trainees underwent technical and pedagogical training; and 20 engineers and technicians working on the operation and maintenance of the sewage system in the Gaza Strip underwent specialized training at Bir Zeit University.

8. All these training activities were organized locally and made use of Palestinian facilitators, in some cases under the guidance of foreign specialists from United Nations agencies and other external sources.

III. NEW ACTIVITIES

9. As a result of the assessment of the technical cooperation and capital assistance needs conducted in the first quarter of 1992, through an increasingly close relationship with the local Palestinian leadership, a number of priority areas have been identified for new activities. These areas are the formulation of development and environmental policies; the reactivation of productive sectors, in particular agriculture and industry; and the development of human resources, with a special emphasis on reducing disparities within the Palestinian society, promoting the role of Palestinian women in the development process as beneficiaries as well as actors and assisting the underprivileged.

10. UNDP also followed up on its earlier initiatives in the field of information exchange between donors. The first "Compendium of Ongoing Technical Assistance Projects in the Occupied Palestinian Territories" was compiled by UNDP and issued in April 1992. Sectoral working groups met several times throughout the year with the presence of leading Palestinian specialists, thus allowing a fruitful exchange of views and information on the situation and on the priorities to be assigned to specific development areas. The work of some of these groups led to the identification of technical cooperation needs and to concrete projects. In the working group on agriculture, for instance, all Palestinian institutions working in that sector presented a joint assessment of the damages suffered during the 1991-1992 winter season. As a result, three donors are funding and implementing a relief project, aimed at allowing the most affected farmers to resume their production activities for the next season, in spite of having suffered severe financial losses.

11. Although sporadic visits by agencies have taken place in the past, in 1992 there was a very substantial increase in the number of such missions: the Economic and Social Commission For Western Asia (ESCWA), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) fielded consultants to the Territories during 1992. Some of these missions carried out specific training activities, while others identified assistance needs for future activities.

12. In October 1992, UNDP was invited to form part of the United Nations delegation to the Multilateral Working Groups of the Middle East peace process. The director of the Programme is currently participating in the ongoing meetings.

13. During the latter part of 1992, a broad review of the Programme was undertaken by a team headed by the former Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations. The mission reviewed in detail the modus operandi of UNDP, as well as concrete operations in the region. The results of its work are being used in the new programming and operational initiatives in progress under the direction of the Special Representative in Jerusalem. It is anticipated that the report of the Ambassador from the Netherlands will be completed during the month of March 1993. It is also expected that this report will be widely disseminated and made available to members of the Governing Council at its fortieth session.